



# **VMUN**

# **BACKGROUND**

# **GUIDE**

# **UNESCO**



## Letter from the EB

Dear Delegates,

It takes us immense pleasure in welcoming you to the Vydehi MUN 2024. We are honored to serve you as Executive Board members in this edition of the conference.

We believe that each and every delegate should go through this guide, to have a clear understanding of the agenda at hand. However, this would only serve as a 'Background' of the agenda and would not be covering all the aspects linked to it. Your real research lies beyond this guide and we are eager to see all of you discussing possible solutions together, applying your extensive research and great knowledge of the topics to be discussed in this committee.

Understanding both the importance and complexity of this agenda, we strongly recommend you to be prepared and well researched in committee, and at the same time request you to participate at all times, making it a learning experience for all of us. Also note, it will be important for you to have a basic understanding of how various rights get affected in the socio-legal context.

If you are participating in a MUN conference for the very first time, we would request you to have an idea of the UNA USA rules of procedure followed in committee, links to the same would be provided at the end of this guide. The rest of the work as a delegate remains the same for you, wherein you research about the agenda, your foreign policy and laws relating to the same. Please take the initiative and research accordingly.

We strongly hope that you all will come prepared and motivated to discuss the situation at hand, brainstorm together to find out solutions of the same, applying legal frameworks and in the process, take back a lot from the committee. Our goal for you in this committee is to have an enriching

experience by learning the art of diplomacy and at the same time see you solve real life problems happening in this world.

We are looking forward to see you in committee, Happy Researching!

Regards,

Sarthak Raktade - Co-Chairperson

Hasita Arvind - Co-Chairperson

Alivia Bhattacharya - Vice-Chairperson

## **Introduction to the Committee**

The United Nations (UN), founded in 1945 after the Second World War, stands as a global platform for cooperation and dialogue among nations. Its primary objectives include maintaining international peace and security, fostering friendly relations among countries, promoting social progress, better living standards, and human rights. As a vast intergovernmental organization, the UN is composed of six main bodies:

General Assembly (GA) – Where all 193 member states have equal representation.

Security Council – Responsible for maintaining international peace and security.

Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) – Coordinates the economic, social, and environmental work of the UN.

International Court of Justice – The principal judicial body.

Secretariat – Provides administrative support to the UN's various bodies.

Trusteeship Council (currently inactive) – Previously oversaw territories transitioning to self-governance.

Within the larger framework of the UN, there are numerous specialized agencies, each focusing on specific areas like health, education, and culture. These agencies operate with considerable autonomy but adhere to the broader UN goals. Among the most prominent specialized agencies is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO).

### **UNESCO**

UNESCO was established in 1945, with a mission to build peace through international cooperation in the fields of education, science, culture, and

communication. Recognizing that lasting peace cannot be achieved solely through political and economic agreements, UNESCO emphasizes the role of education, intercultural dialogue, and the preservation of cultural heritage in fostering understanding and mutual respect among nations. The agency works to combat poverty, ensure sustainable development, and empower marginalized groups.

UNESCO's mandate is formally defined in Article 1, paragraph 3 of the United Nations Charter (1945) and Article 1 of the UNESCO Constitution (1945). UNESCO is tasked with promoting collaboration among Member States in the fields of education, science, and culture to foster peace, uphold the rule of law, and encourage mutual respect. Additionally, UNESCO is responsible for coordinating and advancing knowledge and culture to support "economic stability, political security, and the general well-being of the world's peoples." To fulfill this mandate, UNESCO collaborates directly with Member States, UN organs, intergovernmental organizations (IGOs), and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to promote peace through the exchange of knowledge, culture, and sustainable development strategies. Moreover, UNESCO plays a crucial role in coordinating international conventions and setting global standards in education, culture, and science.

UNESCO's mandate is based on the idea that the political and economic arrangements between states are not enough to achieve peace. Instead, it strives to promote "the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind" to prevent another world war. The organization fosters cooperation across various fields, particularly emphasizing:

- Education: Ensuring inclusive and equitable quality education for all.
- Science: Promoting sustainable development and international cooperation.
- Culture: Protecting cultural diversity, heritage, and promoting the creative industries.

- **Communication and Information:** Advocating for freedom of expression, press freedom, and the protection of journalists.

## **UNESCO's Relationship with the UN**

UNESCO operates as a specialized agency of the United Nations, meaning it functions independently with its own constitution, governing bodies, and finances. While it adheres to UN ideals, it has its own priorities and programs. UNESCO reports to the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which supervises the work of the UN's specialized agencies, but it also collaborates closely with the General Assembly. Every two years, the General Conference of UNESCO members sets policies and the organization's agenda, which is then pursued through collaboration with various UN bodies, national governments, non-governmental organizations, and other stakeholders.

For example, UNESCO frequently collaborates with the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) initiative. Specifically, UNESCO plays a pivotal role in achieving SDG 4 (Quality Education), SDG 11 (Sustainable Cities and Communities), and SDG 16 (Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions), among others. These partnerships ensure that UNESCO's specialized work in education and culture directly contributes to the broader objectives of the United Nations.

## **How UNESCO Functions: Structure and Governance**

The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) has 194 member states and 12 associate members. Membership is governed by the General Conference and the Executive Board, and the Secretariat implements the decisions of these two bodies.

The UNESCO Constitution grants membership to all UN Member States, while non-Member States may join upon the recommendation of the

Executive Board and the approval of two-thirds of the General Conference. Associate Members, which are political or territorial entities that do not qualify as independent states, can also be admitted based on the General Conference's recommendation, and are granted certain rights and obligations. Members suspended or expelled from the UN may face the same actions within UNESCO, and members also have the option to voluntarily withdraw from the organization. UNESCO operates on a biennial budget funded by voluntary contributions from its Member States.

UNESCO has a unique structure that reflects its global mandate. It is governed by three main bodies:

The General Conference – This is the highest decision-making body of UNESCO, consisting of representatives from all member states. It meets every two years to set policies, approve the program, and adopt the budget. During these meetings, key issues are discussed, and priorities are established.

The Executive Board – Composed of 58 elected member states, the Executive Board ensures the implementation of the General Conference's decisions and oversees the agency's administration. It meets twice a year to guide and supervise the program and budget execution.

The Secretariat – Headed by the Director-General, the Secretariat implements the decisions taken by the General Conference and Executive Board. The Secretariat has a broad range of responsibilities, from overseeing educational programs to handling communication and cultural preservation.

## Past Actions and Achievements

Over the decades, UNESCO has been instrumental in promoting peace, education, and cultural preservation worldwide. Some of its notable achievements include:

- **World Heritage Program** – Launched in 1972, the World Heritage Convention aims to identify, protect, and preserve cultural and natural heritage of outstanding value to humanity. Sites such as the Pyramids of Giza, the Great Wall of China, and the Serengeti National Park are protected under this program. This initiative plays a vital role in safeguarding the world's most treasured sites from war, environmental degradation, and neglect.
- **Education for All (EFA)** – UNESCO has long been a champion of universal education. Through its EFA movement, the organization has pushed to make primary education accessible for all children, while also improving the quality of education across the globe. The EFA movement played a foundational role in developing the Global Education 2030 Agenda, focusing on ensuring quality education as part of the SDGs.
- **Man and the Biosphere Programme (MAB)** – Launched in 1971, this initiative promotes innovative approaches to sustainable development by encouraging research and partnerships on biodiversity conservation and the sustainable use of natural resources. It designates and protects Biosphere Reserves around the world, contributing to global environmental sustainability.
- **Global Monitoring Reports on Education** – Through these reports, UNESCO evaluates the global progress on educational goals. The Global Education Monitoring (GEM) Report has become an authoritative source on educational trends, challenges, and solutions, offering guidance to countries in achieving quality education for all.
- **Protection of Intangible Cultural Heritage** – In addition to physical heritage, UNESCO recognizes the value of intangible cultural heritage, such as oral traditions, rituals, festivals, and traditional



craftsmanship. The 2003 Convention for the Safeguarding of the Intangible Cultural Heritage helps protect and promote cultural practices that are central to communities' identities but are vulnerable to disappearance.

- Freedom of Expression and Press Freedom – UNESCO actively advocates for freedom of expression, the protection of journalists, and access to information as fundamental pillars of democracy. It leads initiatives to raise awareness and address the safety of journalists, particularly in conflict zones. The agency also champions World Press Freedom Day annually on May 3rd.

## **Challenges and Future Directions**

UNESCO continues to face significant challenges, particularly as issues like globalization, climate change, technological advancements, and geopolitical conflicts shape the 21st century. One major challenge is preserving cultural diversity in an era where the homogenizing forces of global media can erode traditional cultures. UNESCO also grapples with educational inequalities that are exacerbated by neo-colonialism, as discussed in this committee's agenda.

In the future, UNESCO aims to further its work on:

- Expanding digital education and addressing the digital divide.
- Promoting education for sustainable development to equip learners with the skills to address climate challenges.
- Supporting cultural diplomacy to bridge divides and promote peace.
- Furthering cooperation among nations to preserve both tangible and intangible heritage.

## **Introduction to the Agenda**

The spectre of colonialism, though officially consigned to history, continues to cast a long shadow over global societies. While the political map has been redrawn, the legacies of this era of domination persist in complex and often insidious ways. This agenda seeks to illuminate the enduring impact of colonialism, particularly within the realms of education and society.

Colonialism, at its core, was a system of exploitation and domination, where powerful nations subjugated weaker territories for economic gain, political control, and cultural hegemony.

The imposition of foreign governance, the extraction of resources, and the erosion of indigenous cultures and knowledge systems were hallmarks of this era.

However, the consequences of colonialism extend far beyond the period of direct rule. The structures, systems, and mentalities forged during this time have continued to shape the global order. Neo-colonialism, a more subtle form of domination, has perpetuated economic dependency, political interference, and cultural imperialism.

This agenda calls for a critical examination of these historical and contemporary challenges. By understanding the roots of these issues, we can begin to address their manifestations in education, where knowledge is shaped, and in society, where identities are formed. It is imperative to recognise the intergenerational trauma, systemic inequalities, and cultural erosion that continue to plague many nations.

# History of Colonialism and Its Evolution into Neo-colonialism

## The Scramble for Africa and the Partition of Asia

- **Berlin Conference:** The 1884-1885 Berlin Conference, convened by Otto von Bismarck, marked the formalization of the European colonization of Africa. This event divided the continent among European powers without regard for existing ethnic or cultural boundaries.
- **Direct and Indirect Rule:** Colonial administrations employed various methods of control. Direct rule involved the replacement of indigenous rulers with colonial officials, while indirect rule utilized existing power structures for colonial purposes.
- **Economic Exploitation:** Colonies were treated as sources of raw materials and markets for manufactured goods. This economic exploitation, often through forced labor and taxation, enriched colonial powers at the expense of colonized peoples.
- **Cultural Domination:** Colonial powers sought to impose their language, religion, and education systems, undermining indigenous cultures and knowledge systems.
- **Infrastructure Development:** While often serving the colonizer's interests, the construction of infrastructure such as railways, roads, and ports laid the groundwork for future economic development.

## The Post-Colonial Era and the Rise of Neo-colonialism

- **Decolonization:** The post-World War II period witnessed a wave of decolonization, with many former colonies gaining political independence.

- **Cold War Dynamics:** The Cold War provided opportunities for neo-colonial influence, as superpowers sought to align newly independent nations with their respective blocs.
- **Economic Dependence:** Former colonies often retained economic ties to their former colonizers, leading to continued dependence on export-oriented economies and vulnerability to market fluctuations.
- **Debt Crisis:** Many developing countries faced severe debt crises, often exacerbated by conditions imposed by international financial institutions.
- **Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs):** Implemented as a condition for receiving loans, SAPs often led to privatization of state-owned enterprises, reduced social spending, and increased reliance on market forces, exacerbating inequality.

## Definitions

- **Neo-colonialism:** The indirect economic, political, and cultural control of a former colony by a foreign power. It occurs after a colony has achieved formal political independence but remains economically and culturally dependent.
- **Colonialism:** The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.
- **Post-colonialism:** The theoretical and literary movement that analyzes the cultural legacy of colonialism and imperialism.
- **Decolonization:** The process of a colony gaining control over its own government.
- **Dependency Theory:** An economic theory that highlights the structural inequalities between developed and developing countries, arguing that the latter are dependent on the former.
- **Globalization:** The process of increasing interconnectedness and interdependence among nations, cultures, and economies.
- **Cultural Imperialism:** The dominance of one culture over another, often through media and popular culture.
- **Brain Drain:** The emigration of highly skilled professionals from a country to another, often for better economic opportunities.



# Educational Implications of Neo-colonialism

## The Colonial Education System

- **Assimilation and Discrimination:** Colonial education systems often aimed to assimilate indigenous populations into the colonizer's culture, while discriminating against local languages and knowledge systems.
- **Vocational Training:** Many colonial education systems focused on vocational training to produce a workforce for the colonial economy, rather than developing critical thinking and leadership skills.
- **Elite Formation:** A small elite was often educated in colonial institutions to serve as intermediaries between the colonial administration and the local population.

## Neo-colonialism and Education

- **Brain Drain:** The continued attraction of skilled professionals to developed countries through higher salaries and better opportunities has exacerbated the loss of human capital in developing countries.
- **Privatization of Education:** The growing role of private education providers has led to increased costs and reduced access for marginalized groups.
- **Globalization and Standardization:** The push for standardized education models can undermine cultural diversity and local relevance.
- **Digital Divide:** Unequal access to technology and digital resources perpetuates educational disparities.

# Social Implications of Neo-colonialism

## Dependency and Underdevelopment

- **Resource Dependence:** Many former colonies remain heavily reliant on the export of primary commodities, making them vulnerable to price fluctuations and limiting economic diversification.
- **Foreign Aid and Conditionality:** Dependence on foreign aid can lead to political interference and economic distortions.
- **Corruption and Rent-Seeking:** Weak governance and a lack of accountability can create opportunities for corruption and rent-seeking behavior.

## Cultural Imperialism and Identity Crisis

- **Media Dominance:** The dominance of Western media and popular culture can erode traditional values and undermine cultural identity.
- **Consumerism:** The promotion of consumerism can lead to unsustainable consumption patterns and social inequality.
- **Loss of Indigenous Knowledge:** The marginalization of indigenous knowledge systems can result in the loss of valuable cultural and ecological wisdom.

## Political Instability and Conflict

- **Unequal Power Relations:** The persistence of unequal power relations between former colonizers and their former colonies can contribute to political instability.
- **Ethnic and Religious Divisions:** Colonial policies often exacerbated ethnic and religious tensions, leading to post-colonial conflicts.
- **Resource Conflicts:** Competition for natural resources can fuel conflict and violence.

# Case Studies: The Lingering Impact of Neo-colonialism

## Case Study 1: The Congo

The Congo, under Belgian colonial rule, serves as a stark example of the exploitation and devastation wrought by colonialism.

- **Economic Exploitation:** The Congo was transformed into a personal fiefdom for King Leopold II, with rubber being the primary commodity. Forced labor and brutal punishments were used to maximize production, leading to millions of deaths. The infrastructure developed primarily served the extraction of resources, with little benefit to the Congolese people.
- **Cultural Suppression:** The imposition of French and Belgian culture and the suppression of indigenous languages and customs eroded cultural identity.
- **Political Manipulation:** The Congo remained politically unstable post-independence, with external powers often intervening to protect their economic interests.
- **Resource Curse:** Despite abundant natural resources, the Congo continues to grapple with poverty, corruption, and conflict, a condition often attributed to the legacy of colonial exploitation and mismanagement.

## Case Study 2: India

India's experience under British colonial rule offers a complex picture of both resistance and enduring impact.

- **Economic Exploitation:** The British East India Company, and subsequently the British Crown, extracted enormous wealth from India through trade, taxation, and land revenue. The emphasis on cash crops disrupted traditional agricultural practices and led to famines.

- **Educational Impact:** While the British introduced Western education, it was primarily designed to create a class of clerks and administrators loyal to the colonial regime. Higher education institutions were established, but access was limited, reinforcing social hierarchies.
- **Political Awakening:** The colonial experience fueled anti-colonial sentiment and led to the rise of nationalist movements, culminating in India's independence. However, the colonial administrative structures and legal systems left a lasting imprint.
- **Lingering Inequalities:** Despite independence, India continues to grapple with issues such as poverty, inequality, and caste-based discrimination, which have their roots in the colonial era.

### Case Study 3: South Africa

South Africa's experience with apartheid is a particularly egregious example of racial discrimination and oppression rooted in colonial legacies.

- **Apartheid as a Continuation of Colonialism:** The apartheid system was built on the racial hierarchies established during colonial rule.
- **Economic Disparity:** The system was designed to benefit the white minority at the expense of the black majority, creating a stark economic divide that persists today.
- **Education as a Tool of Control:** Bantu education, imposed on black South Africans, was designed to produce a compliant workforce rather than critical thinkers.
- **Post-Apartheid Challenges:** While apartheid ended in 1994, South Africa continues to face challenges related to inequality, poverty, and racial tensions, reflecting the enduring legacy of colonialism and apartheid.

### Case Study 4: Australia

Australia's history is marked by the dispossession of Indigenous peoples and the establishment of a settler colony.

- **Land Dispossession:** The arrival of European settlers led to the systematic dispossession of Indigenous lands and the disruption of traditional ways of life.
- **Forced Removal:** Indigenous children were forcibly removed from their families under the policy of "assimilation," leading to intergenerational trauma.
- **Economic Exploitation:** Indigenous peoples were marginalized in the economy and denied equal opportunities.
- **Recognition and Reconciliation:** Australia has made efforts to address the legacy of colonialism through reconciliation processes and the recognition of Indigenous rights, but challenges persist.

These case studies illustrate the diverse and complex ways in which colonialism and neo-colonialism have shaped nations and societies. The impacts of these historical injustices continue to be felt today, and addressing these legacies is essential for building equitable and sustainable futures.



## **Relevant International Legal Framework**

### **1. International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESCR)**

The ICESCR is a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966, which came into force in 1976. It outlines a wide range of economic, social, cultural, civil, political, and environmental rights. In relation to the agenda of addressing the lingering impact of neo-colonialism in educational and social spheres, the ICESCR is particularly relevant as it guarantees the right to education, including equal access to education, and the right to participate in cultural life. These rights are often compromised in post-colonial contexts due to the legacy of colonial policies and structures.

### **2. International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR)**

The ICCPR is another multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1966 and entered into force in 1976. It outlines a number of civil and political rights, including the right to life, liberty, and security of person; freedom of speech, religion, and assembly; and the right to participate in government. In the context of neo-colonialism, the ICCPR is relevant as it protects the right to self-determination, a principle often violated during the colonial era. Additionally, the covenant's provisions on non-discrimination and equality can be used to address the ongoing inequalities stemming from colonial legacies.

### **3. Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (CERD)**

The CERD is a treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1965 and entered into force in 1969. It commits state parties to eliminate all forms of racial discrimination and to guarantee the right to equality. In the context of neo-colonialism, the CERD is crucial as it can be used to address the racial inequalities that often persist in former colonies. These

inequalities can manifest in various forms, including unequal access to education, employment, and healthcare.

#### **4. Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)**

The CRC is a multilateral treaty adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1989. It outlines the civil, political, economic, social, health, and cultural rights of children. In relation to neo-colonialism, the CRC is relevant as it addresses the specific needs of children in post-colonial societies, particularly those affected by the legacies of colonialism. The treaty emphasizes the importance of education, cultural identity, and protection from exploitation and abuse, issues that are often exacerbated in post-colonial contexts.

#### **5. Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples**

The Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples is a United Nations declaration adopted by the General Assembly in 2007. It outlines the individual and collective rights of Indigenous peoples, including the right to self-determination, culture, and education. In the context of neo-colonialism, the declaration is particularly relevant as it addresses the specific challenges faced by Indigenous peoples in post-colonial societies. Many Indigenous communities continue to experience marginalization and discrimination, and the declaration provides a framework for their empowerment and protection.

## Challenges in Implementing International Law to Address Neo-colonialism

While international law provides a robust framework to address the lingering impact of neo-colonialism, its effective implementation faces significant challenges.

- **Sovereignty and Non-Interference:** The principle of state sovereignty, a cornerstone of international law, often conflicts with the imperative to address human rights abuses and inequalities rooted in colonial legacies. States may resist external intervention in their domestic affairs, hindering the implementation of international law.
- **Weak Domestic Legal Frameworks:** Many former colonies have inherited weak legal systems that struggle to enforce international law domestically. This can lead to impunity for human rights violators and perpetuate inequalities.
- **Lack of Political Will:** Effective implementation of international law requires strong political will from governments. In many cases, political elites may be reluctant to address the legacies of colonialism, as it might challenge their power and interests.
- **Economic Dependence:** Many former colonies continue to be economically dependent on former colonial powers or other global economic players. This dependence can limit their ability to pursue policies that challenge the status quo and implement international law effectively.
- **Corruption and Lack of Transparency:** Corruption and lack of transparency can hinder the effective use of resources and undermine efforts to address the legacies of colonialism.
- **Cultural and Historical Factors:** Deep-rooted cultural and historical factors can impede progress in addressing the legacies of colonialism. Overcoming these challenges requires long-term efforts to build trust and understanding.

## Role of International Organizations

International organizations play a crucial role in addressing the challenges of implementing international law to address neo-colonialism.

- **Norm-Setting and Standard-Setting:** Organizations like the United Nations and its specialized agencies set global norms and standards related to human rights, development, and cultural diversity. These norms can influence domestic policies and practices.
- **Monitoring and Reporting:** International organizations monitor the implementation of international law and report on the human rights situation in different countries. This can help to expose violations and generate public pressure for change.
- **Technical Assistance and Capacity Building:** These organizations provide technical assistance and capacity building to governments and civil society organizations to strengthen their ability to implement international law.
- **Financial Support:** International organizations can provide financial support for programs and projects aimed at addressing the legacies of colonialism.
- **Advocacy and Diplomacy:** They engage in advocacy and diplomacy to promote the implementation of international law and to support the efforts of affected countries.

## **QARMA (Questions a Resolution Must Answer)**

1. How can international frameworks be strengthened to ensure the protection of indigenous cultures and educational systems from the lingering effects of neo-colonialism?
2. What measures can be taken to reduce economic dependence on former colonial powers and promote sustainable development in post-colonial nations?
3. How can UNESCO and other international organisations promote the inclusion of indigenous knowledge systems and local languages in education curricula?
4. What strategies can be implemented to address the "brain drain" phenomenon and improve the retention of skilled professionals in developing countries?
5. How can global education models be reformed to respect cultural diversity while ensuring equitable access to technological and digital resources?
6. What mechanisms should be in place to address the intergenerational trauma and systemic inequalities resulting from colonial legacies in society and education?



## References

[UNA-USA Rules of Procedure](#)

[United Nations Charter](#)

[UNESCO Constitution \(1945\)](#)

[International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights \(ICESCR\)](#)

[International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights \(ICCPR\)](#)

[Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination \(CERD\)](#)

[Convention on the Rights of the Child \(CRC\)](#)

[Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#)